



LEUKEMIA &  
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# NUTRITION HANDBOOK FOR CAREGIVERS

**HELPING YOUR LOVED ONE STAY WELL-NOURISHED  
DURING CANCER TREATMENT**

Thank you for taking on the important role of caregiver for a cancer patient.

In this handbook, you will find

- Nutrition strategies
- Tips to manage side effects
- Food safety guidelines
- Meal and snack ideas
- Worksheets and sample grocery list.

The support you provide during treatment and beyond is an important part of your loved one's care.

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# NUTRITION HANDBOOK FOR CAREGIVERS

Nutrition and food are important factors in health and recovery during cancer treatment. Food challenges begin when cancer, side effects, and appetite changes affect the patient's ability to eat or maintain proper nutrition.

Favorite foods or go-to beverages may not be the best choices for the patient. Perceptions about what is healthy to eat and what isn't healthy to eat can also be an issue. It is important for the caregiver to be supportive (but tactful) and help the patient to make good food choices.

**Caregiver's Role in Nutrition.** Food and food choices may be a touchy subject for your loved one. Food choices are one of the few things over which a cancer patient has control. At times, your loved one may be resistant to eating. Try to encourage your loved one to eat but don't be too forceful. Cancer treatment is an emotionally challenging time. Don't let disagreements over food turn into full-blown fights or arguments. Reach out to the healthcare team for support and resources.

Many different considerations influence a cancer patient's food choices—health, treatment, nutrition guidelines and social factors. For example, even though a patient may understand that healthy foods promote healing, if the patient feels nauseated after chemotherapy, he or she may not want to eat. A patient who cannot tolerate alcohol may feel social pressure to drink when out with friends. These are examples that show how different factors impact food choices.

Food provides valuable nutrients for cancer patients. Eating well during cancer treatment helps to speed recovery, ease side effects, and keep the treatment plan running smoothly. However, your loved one may not be able to plan grocery lists, grocery shop, eat, digest foods or prepare meals as he or she did before the onset of his or her illness. This is where you, as the caregiver, can help. Depending on the health of your loved one, you may need to assist with

- Grocery shopping
- Meal preparation and cooking
- Encouraging the patient to make healthy food choices
- Managing the patient's treatment side effects.

To get started, ask the appropriate member of the healthcare team about specific foods or meal recommendations and restrictions, if any. A printed meal plan or food list is often the best approach to nutrition planning. Ask for a referral to a registered dietitian for additional help.

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPEAK ONE-ON-ONE WITH A REGISTERED DIETITIAN?

To schedule a personalized nutrition consultation, use the online scheduler at [www.pearlpoint.org/nutritionconsult/](http://www.pearlpoint.org/nutritionconsult/) or call **(877) 467-1936**.

## TIP:

Nutrition advice is everywhere, but it's not all good information. Be cautious of nutrition advice that you find online, in magazines or advertisements and that you get from well-meaning family and friends. To get nutrition information from a reliable source, talk to a registered dietitian.

**Nutrition for Cancer Patients.** Your loved one can follow guidelines for proper nutrition. Talk to the healthcare team before making changes to what and how your loved one eats. Your loved one may only need to make a few changes based on overall health, treatment plan or type of cancer.

**Nutrition Guidelines.** The following list offers helpful suggestions to make good food choices.

**Select a variety of fruits and vegetables every day.** Fruits and vegetables offer the body antioxidants, which can help fight cancer. Choose a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables to get the greatest benefit. Encourage your loved one to eat a minimum of five servings of fruits and vegetables daily.

**Choose protein-rich foods.** Protein helps the body to repair cells and tissues. It also helps the immune system to recover from illness. Include a source of lean protein at all meals and as snacks. Good sources of lean protein include

- Lean meats, such as chicken, fish, or turkey
- Eggs
- Low-fat dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese or dairy substitutes
- Nuts and nut butters
- Beans
- Soy foods.

**Add whole grains.** Whole grains provide a good source of carbohydrates and fiber which help keep energy levels up. Good sources of whole grains include

- Oatmeal
- Whole-wheat breads
- Brown rice
- Whole-grain pastas.

**Choose sources of healthy fat.** Avoid fried, greasy, and fatty foods. Choose baked, broiled, or grilled foods instead. Healthy fats include

- Olive oil/canola oil
- Avocados
- Nuts
- Seeds.

**Limit sweets and added sugars.** Foods high in added sugars, such as desserts and sweets, provide little nutritional benefit and often take the place of other foods that are better for the patient.

**Stay hydrated.** Drinking enough fluids during cancer treatment is important for preventing dehydration. A good starting goal is to drink 64 ounces of fluid daily. Your loved one's fluid goal may be different so ask for guidance from the healthcare team. Your loved one should avoid drinking large amounts of caffeinated beverages. Too much caffeine can lead to dehydration.

**Check with the healthcare team before the patient takes any vitamins or supplements.** Some medications and cancer treatments may interact with vitamins and supplements. Choose food as the main source for nutrients. If the patient already takes supplements, give the healthcare team a list of them.

**Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all.** Alcohol may contribute to dehydration. It can lower the abilities of the immune system, and provides no beneficial nutrients.

## TIP:

In this section, the food guidelines recommended for the patient also apply to people without a cancer diagnosis. Proper nutrition can provide more energy and reduce the risk for diseases, such as heart disease and cancer. Don't sacrifice your own well-being. Take care of yourself by making good food choices, too!



Visit [www.pearlpoint.org/NutritionByDiagnosis](http://www.pearlpoint.org/NutritionByDiagnosis) for more nutrition information based on your loved one's diagnosis.

**Malnutrition.** Malnutrition is a serious concern for many cancer patients. A person who is not receiving or absorbing proper nutrition and the right amount of calories or nutrients needed for healthy bodily function, will become malnourished. Cancer patients who are malnourished are at greater risk for health complications, hospitalization, infections, loss of muscle strength and poor quality of life.

To decrease the risk of malnutrition, your loved one should try to avoid losing weight during treatment unless advised to do so by the healthcare team. Strict dieting is not recommended during cancer treatment. Losing weight can lower the patient’s energy level and decrease the body’s ability to fight infection. As much as possible, the patient should aim to maintain a stable weight during treatment.

Even with these serious risks, nutrition problems may be overlooked by the patient and the healthcare team. As a caregiver, you can help watch for the signs and/or symptoms of malnutrition. They include

- Unintentional weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Changes in food intake
- Side effects that make eating difficult for the patient.

Take this short quiz to see if your loved one may be at risk for malnutrition. Check either Yes or No for each question.

NUTRITION STATUS	YES	NO
Has the patient lost 5 to 10 lbs or more without trying in the last 3 months?		
Is the patient eating less due to decreased appetite?		
Has the patient’s food intake changed?		
Do side effects make it difficult for the patient to eat (eg, nausea, taste changes, sore mouth, trouble swallowing, diarrhea, constipation, dental issues)?		
Does the patient no longer enjoy meal-times as much as he or she did before the onset of cancer?		

If you checked “Yes” in answer to one or more of the questions above, alert the healthcare team. Your loved one may be at risk for malnutrition. If your loved one is unable to eat enough food, or drink enough fluids by mouth for proper nutrition, he or she may need nutrition therapy. This means that nutrition is either given via a feeding tube or intravenously (total parenteral nutrition [TPN]). If your loved one needs a feeding tube, members of the healthcare team will teach you how to care for the tube, administer nutrition, and closely monitor weight loss.

**Nutrition Therapy by Tube or IV.** If your loved one experiences significant weight loss or is unable to eat, the healthcare team may recommend nutrition therapy by tube or IV to improve nutrition and combat weight loss. Nutrition therapy can be given by

- Large IV (intravenous catheter) into the bloodstream (parenteral nutrition)
- Tube into the stomach or intestines (enteral nutrition).

An enteral feeding tube can be placed in a few different locations depending on your loved one’s health. These include

- Nasogastric tube (NG tube or NGT)— tube from the nose to the stomach
- Nasoduodenal (ND)— tube from the nose to the duodenum (beginning of the small intestine)

- Nasojejunal (NJ)—tube from the nose into the small intestine, past the duodenum
- Gastrostomy (G tube)—tube from the skin of the abdomen directly into the stomach. This is also called a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy (PEG) tube.
- Gastro-jejunal (GJ)—tube from the skin of the abdomen into the stomach that is then threaded to the small intestine
- Jejunostomy (J tube)—tube placed from the skin directly into the small intestine.

Feeding tubes are placed for short-term and long-term use. Some patients receive all of their nutrition through the tube if they are unable to eat or if it is unsafe for them to eat or drink. Other patients may continue to eat by mouth but receive feedings through the tube to increase calorie and nutrient intake.

Nutrition therapy is most often given at home through a home health service. As the caregiver, you may need to assist your loved one with feedings. A home health nurse will teach you how to use and care for the tube.



Visit [www.pearlpoint.org/NutritionTherapy](http://www.pearlpoint.org/NutritionTherapy) to learn more.

**Food Safety.** The immune system is weakened during cancer treatment. It is important to pay special attention to food safety during cancer treatment to reduce your loved one's risk of being exposed to potentially harmful bacteria from spoiled or undercooked foods.

**Food Safety Guidelines.** The following tips can reduce the risk of foodborne illness:

#### Keep everything clean.

- Wash your hands often and thoroughly, especially before and after handling any food. Be sure to wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds. Pay special attention to fingernails and the backs of the hands. Encourage your loved one to do the same.
- Keep raw and cooked foods separate. Do not reuse any utensils, cutting boards, plates or dishes once they have been touched by raw meat or eggs. Utensils, cutting boards, plates and dishes, that have been used for preparing raw meats or eggs should be washed in hot, soapy water. It is best to keep one cutting board for meat and another for fruits/vegetables. Have additional clean cutting boards available for other food preparation as well.
- Disinfect all food preparation surfaces, including sinks and countertops, both before and after cooking.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables under clean, running water before eating, peeling or cooking. You may choose to use a produce brush.

#### Cook food thoroughly.

- Avoid raw foods, such as sushi, undercooked eggs, and meats that have not been cooked to a proper internal temperature.
- Cook all eggs until both the white and the yolk are firm. Avoid foods that may contain raw eggs, such as raw cookie dough and homemade mayonnaise.
- Use a meat thermometer to make sure that all meats are cooked to the proper internal temperature before they are eaten. Use the chart below for reference.

### Questions to Ask Members of the Healthcare Team

Ask the healthcare team the following questions about nutrition therapy:

- What kind of tube will my loved one have?
- How long will the tube be in place?
- Who will provide instructions for feedings and caring for the tube?
- Who will order supplies?
- Whom can I call with questions?
- What are the possible issues that may arise with a feeding tube? And, what issues require immediate medical attention?

MEAT	INTERNAL MINIMUM TEMPERATURE
Ground beef, pork, veal, or lamb	160°F
Turkey	165°F
Chicken	165°F
Steak or other cuts of beef	145°F Allow to rest 3 minutes before carving or eating
Pork	145°F
Seafood	145°F
Egg dishes	160°F
Casseroles	165°F
Reheated leftovers	165°F

Visit [eatright.org](http://eatright.org) or [FoodSafety.gov](http://FoodSafety.gov) for more information on cooking food to a safe internal temperature.

### **Avoid foods associated with foodborne illness.**

In addition to undercooked meat, these foods include

- Unpasteurized beverages, such as unpasteurized juice or raw milk
- Soft mold-ripened and blue-veined cheeses, such as Brie, Camembert, Roquefort, Stilton, Gorgonzola and blue or other soft, unpasteurized cheeses
- Raw sprouts, such as alfalfa sprouts
- Well water, unless tested, that is either filtered or has been boiled for 1 minute before drinking or has been boiled for 3 minutes before drinking in altitudes of about 2,000 meters (about 6,562 feet).
- Unwashed fruits and vegetables.

### **Store food safely.**

- Always store food as soon as possible or within one hour of either purchasing or cooking it.
- Label food (use a marker or pen) with a “use by” date if the packaging does not have an expiration date.
- Put foods with the closest expiration date at the front of the fridge or shelves so that you are more likely to use them.
- Discard leftovers or open packages within 1 to 4 days. If you are unsure if something is safe to eat, remember, when in doubt, throw it out.

### **Be careful when eating at restaurants and shopping for food.**

- Buy only from trusted vendors with high grades in health department inspections.
- Avoid buying food from street vendors.
- Do not eat free food samples when shopping.
- Do not choose restaurants with buffets when eating out. If you are at a party, ask if your loved one can go through the buffet line first.

- At restaurants, ask for meat to be prepared well done.
- If taking home leftovers, ask to bag the food yourself and make sure to refrigerate the leftovers quickly.

### What Should You Do if You Suspect a Foodborne Illness?

You or your loved one may get a foodborne illness, so have a plan in place. Alert the healthcare team as soon as possible. Signs and symptoms of foodborne illness include fever, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and/or stomach cramps. Mark any recently eaten food or beverage as “do not eat.” Keep the containers in the fridge in case the healthcare team wants to test any of the potentially contaminated foods.

**Neutropenia and Diet.** Neutropenia is a condition characterized by a lower-than-normal number of neutrophils (a type of white blood cell). If the patient has neutropenia, the doctor may recommend special food guidelines for immunosuppressed patients. The guidelines will spell out ways to protect the patient from bacteria and other harmful organisms found in some food and drinks.

If the patient has had a stem cell transplantation as part of his or her treatment plan, his or her diet restrictions may be stricter than those of a patient who has had chemotherapy or radiation therapy and no transplant.

Members of your healthcare team may refer to these guidelines as a “neutropenic diet” or you may have encountered the term yourself. This diet was supposed to help individuals with neutropenia to learn how to decrease exposure to bacteria and other harmful organisms found in some foods; however, a universally accepted definition of what foods should be included or excluded was never developed.

In a review of studies, the neutropenic diet was never proven to decrease exposure to bacteria in foods. This diet does not seem to benefit patients in any way. Safe preparation and handling of foods is more important than restricting the intake of specific food groups because a balanced diet and optimal nutrition are the most significant concern for patients who are coping with chemotherapy and other treatments.

Food guidelines for immunosuppressed patients vary among cancer centers. Ask members of your loved one’s healthcare team for any special instructions.

**Nutrition Guidelines after Surgery.** Your loved one’s treatment plan may include surgery. To recover from surgery, the body needs extra calories and protein to promote healing. Surgery to the digestive system including the mouth, throat, stomach, small intestine or colon may make it difficult for your loved one to stay well-nourished. Depending on the type of surgery, side effects may include

- Decreased appetite
- Gas, cramping or constipation
- Difficulty chewing or swallowing
- Decreased ability to absorb nutrients from food.

If your loved one’s ability to absorb nutrients from food will be compromised by surgery, the healthcare team may prescribe vitamin supplements. Do not provide your loved one with any vitamins or supplements without speaking to the healthcare team first. The healthcare team may also recommend that your loved one follow a specific diet after surgery such as a liquid diet, soft-foods diet or fiber-restricted diet. Ask the healthcare team for written instructions and a list of recommended foods and foods to avoid.

### Questions to Ask Members of the Healthcare Team

Ask the healthcare team the following questions about side effects:

- What side effects are common with this treatment? Can you provide a printed list?
- What can be done to prevent side effects?
- Whom should I call if the patient begins to experience a side effect?
- Which side effects, signs or symptoms require a trip to the emergency room?





Visit [www.pearlpoint.org/samplemenus](http://www.pearlpoint.org/samplemenus) to find sample menus for specific needs. For nutrition guidelines by type of surgery, visit the following Web pages:

- Whipple procedure (pancreatic cancer): [www.pearlpoint.org/whipple](http://www.pearlpoint.org/whipple)
  - Esophagectomy: [www.pearlpoint.org/esophagectomy](http://www.pearlpoint.org/esophagectomy)
  - Colectomy: [www.pearlpoint.org/colectomy](http://www.pearlpoint.org/colectomy)
  - Gastrectomy: [www.pearlpoint.org/gastrectomy](http://www.pearlpoint.org/gastrectomy)
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**Managing Side Effects with Nutrition.** Cancer patients often experience side effects due to cancer and cancer treatments. Side effects can be either short term or long term. Some side effects happen during treatment. Others can occur after treatment ends. The type and severity of side effects will depend on the specific treatment plan and the patient's overall health. Many side effects of cancer treatment are nutrition-related such as nausea, diarrhea, constipation, decreased appetite and fatigue. These side effects can make eating and drinking enough difficult. There are many ways to help manage treatment side effects—lifestyle changes, nutrition, exercise, and medication.

As a caregiver, there are many ways in which you can help your loved one to manage side effects. Continue reading for advice on developing some general strategies and suggestions for managing a wide range of side effects.

**Lifestyle Changes to Manage Side Effects.** Making adjustments to your loved one's daily habits can make the side effects of treatment more manageable and improve quality of life. Use the following suggestions to help manage side effects:

**Keep a log and track side effects so you can detect patterns that may be contributing to side effects.**

- By tracking your loved one's daily food intake, side effects, timing and well-being, you may be able to determine foods or behaviors that make side effects worse or you may be able to help your loved one feel better.  
For example,
  - Does a large breakfast keep your loved one energized throughout the day?
  - Is a certain food causing your loved one to experience gas or diarrhea?
  - Does skipping lunch make your loved one feel nauseated later in the day?
- Once you have figured out what makes your loved one's side effects better or worse, you can adjust accordingly.
- You can also share the log with the healthcare team. This way, the healthcare team can determine if your loved one needs medication or if a change in dosage will help to ameliorate the side effects.



Use the **Food Intake and Side-Effect Log** on *page 20*.

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**Encourage your loved one to remain active.**

- Exercise can help relieve many of the side effects related to cancer treatment. Exercise can help with digestive problems, pain management, maintaining muscle mass and improving sleep patterns. It may sound counterintuitive, but exercise can also increase the patient's energy levels. Exercise does not need to be strenuous. Even a walk around the block can help.
- Check with the healthcare team before your loved one begins a new exercise regimen.

**Encourage your loved one to practice good dental and mouth care.**

- A sore mouth, mouth sores and dry mouth are all possible side effects of cancer treatment. Proper oral care helps to manage these symptoms and prevent secondary issues, such as tooth decay.

- For a sore mouth, ask the doctor about special mouthwashes and sprays that can numb the mouth and throat if the discomfort persists.
- For a dry mouth, ask the doctor about artificial saliva products, such as rinses and mints that can be purchased over the counter.
- Tell the healthcare team if your loved one's gums are bleeding or if your loved one has white patches in the mouth. Both can be signs of infection.

**Suggest that your loved one wear loose clothing to lessen pain with digestion or nausea.**

- Clothing that fits tightly around the midsection may aggravate digestive issues and make nausea worse.

**Avoid strong smells or odors in the home.**

- Strong odors may trigger nausea in some patients. Avoid using air fresheners, scented candles, perfume or scented cleaning supplies in your loved one's home.

**TIP:**

Remember to respect your loved one's self-esteem. If he or she is able to prepare food and enjoys cooking, let him or her do so. Offer to assist by chopping veggies or cleaning up after dinner instead.



To find more tips and strategies, by specific side effect, visit [www.pearlpoint.org/SideEffects](http://www.pearlpoint.org/SideEffects) and view the full side-effect management series.

**Food Preparation Tips to Manage Side Effects.** Fatigue, sensitivity to odors, and other side effects may make food preparation difficult for your loved one. As a caregiver, assisting with changes to food choices and food preparation can be a good way to help your loved one manage side effects.

Here are some tips to make food preparation easier and help your loved one to manage some of the side effects of treatment.

**Prepare small, frequent meals throughout the day.**

- Your loved one may not have much of an appetite. Eating frequent small meals will help ensure the patient's body is getting enough calories, protein and nutrients so he or she can tolerate treatment.
- Serving small meals frequently throughout the day allows for better digestion, fewer stomach upsets, and more energy.
- Use smaller plates and cups to help control portion size.
- Your loved one should aim to eat five to six small meals a day or about every 3 hours throughout the day.

**Ask for requests.**

- If you (as a caregiver) are preparing a meal, check with your loved one to see what kinds of food and drink sound good.
- Try asking your loved one, "What can you eat for lunch today to build up your strength?" instead of "What do you want to eat?"
- Try to avoid serving the same thing every day, unless your loved one requests it.

**Limit high-fat foods.**

- Prepare food by baking, slow cooking, grilling or broiling to limit fats. Fats can make some digestive issues worse.
- Choose healthy fats such as avocados, nuts and lean proteins for nourishment.
- If your loved one needs to gain weight or stop losing weight, add healthy fats and oils to your loved one's foods to add extra calories.
- Limit foods labeled as "fat-free" as these can lead to diarrhea.

### Eliminate problem foods.

- Certain foods may make your loved one's side effects worse and these foods can differ from patient to patient. If a certain food item isn't well tolerated, remember to eliminate that food from meals in the future.
- Foods your loved one may have enjoyed before treatment may cause issues now. For example, some cancer patients experience lactose intolerance as a side effect of treatment.
- You can determine which foods may be "problem foods" for your loved one by tracking food intake and side effects daily.

### Check the spices to combat changes in taste.

- Changes in taste and smell are common side effects of cancer treatment.
- Check in with your loved one. You may need to adjust or change spices to adapt to changing tastes.
- If your loved one complains of a metallic taste, switch to plastic utensils and plates.

### Keep aromas to a minimum.

- Sensitivity to smells or odors is another side effect of cancer treatment. If odor is an issue, cook while the patient is out of the house or asleep.
- Use fans to move food aromas and cooking smells out of the kitchen and house.
- A small personal fan at the dinner table may help.
- Prepare cold meals like sandwiches, fruit and cheese plates, crackers with peanut butter and celery, and smoothies.
- Use cups with lids and straws.

### Plan meals in advance.

- Friends and family members may want to help prepare meals. Keep a list on the refrigerator of who is bringing what and when.
- Label prepared foods with an "eat-by" date.
- You can also use online resources to help with meal planning and coordination.

### Sip liquids between meals.

- Staying hydrated is important, so encourage your loved one to sip liquids between meals, but to stop drinking 30 minutes before a meal or snack to build an appetite.
- Drinking too much at a meal, especially low-calorie beverages, can replace vital nutrient-dense foods, such as meat, vegetables and fruits.
- Limit drinks with meals so that more solid foods with calories can be consumed.

## TIP:

### Homemade Electrolyte Drink Recipe

Make a homemade electrolyte replacement drink by mixing the following ingredients: ¼ teaspoon salt, 8 teaspoons sugar, 3 tablespoons orange juice concentrate, and 4 cups water.

### WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Schedule a personalized nutrition consultation with a registered dietitian. Contact an LLS Information Specialist at **(800) 955-4572** or visit **[www.LLS.org/nutrition](http://www.LLS.org/nutrition)**.



Use an app or check an online site to coordinate delivery of meals from friends and family.

- Take Them a Meal: **[TakeThemAMeal.com](http://TakeThemAMeal.com)**
- Meal Train: **[www.mealtrain.com](http://www.mealtrain.com)**
- CareCalendar: **[www.carecalendar.org](http://www.carecalendar.org)**



Use the **Meal Planning** worksheet on *page 21* to plan meals in advance.

### **Add iron-rich foods to meals if your loved one has anemia.**

- Anemia is caused by low numbers of red blood cells. The healthcare team will tell you if your loved one is anemic. Often a patient who has anemia has no obvious symptoms, but symptoms can include fatigue, shortness of breath, dizziness and pale skin.
- Iron-rich foods include: liver, beef, chicken, pork loin, salmon, clams, and oysters. Nonmeat foods that are a good source of iron include fortified cereals, lentils, pumpkin seeds, spinach, kidney beans, tofu, and raisins.
- Avoid coffee and tea at mealtimes because they can interfere with iron absorption.
- Do not provide an iron supplement without checking with the healthcare team.

### **Serve moist foods if the patient has difficulty swallowing.**

- Moist foods are the easiest to swallow.
- Foods with moisture, such as tomatoes, applesauce, canned fruits, cooked vegetables, gelatin, soups, puddings and ice cream all provide water. So, the patient won't need a big glass of water with the meal.
- Moist foods also require less cutting and chewing, which conserves energy to eat the rest of the prepared food.

### **Prepare smoothies, shakes, or liquid nutrition supplements to add calories and protein.**

- Liquids can be easier to consume than solid foods. Smoothies or shakes can serve as a small-meal replacement.
- Premade liquid nutrition supplements are available at grocery and drug stores. Ask a registered dietitian which type is best for your loved one.
- If your loved one is not eating well or losing weight, add ingredients that provide calories and protein, such as whole milk, powdered milk, protein powder, peanut butter, ice cream or yogurt to smoothies, shakes or liquid nutrition supplements.

### **Choose cold foods to sooth a sore mouth or throat.**

- Popsicles, frozen fruit, or flavored ice can offer relief if your loved one is suffering from a sore mouth or throat.
- Popsicles also help with hydration and count toward daily fluid intake.

### **Include foods that promote healthy bowel function.**

- Add foods with fiber if they are well tolerated. Gradually increase fiber intake to 25 to 35 grams daily. High-fiber foods include whole grains, beans, lentils, and the skins of fruits and vegetables.
- To relieve constipation, choose high-fiber foods and encourage the patient to drink plenty of water. You can also try giving the patient plum or prune juice.
- Do not give the patient medication for constipation without checking with the healthcare team.

### **Choose food and drinks carefully if your loved one experiences diarrhea.**

- Avoid high-fiber, spicy, fried, and high-fat foods.
- Choose white rice, applesauce, cooked vegetables and low-fat meat and dairy instead.
- To stay hydrated, your loved one should drink lots of clear liquids, such as water, ginger ale, sports drinks or electrolyte-replacement drinks.
- Call the healthcare team if your loved one experiences severe diarrhea.
- Do not give antidiarrheal medications without checking with the healthcare team.

### Use pictures of food to stimulate appetite if your loved one doesn't want to eat.

- Seeing food advertisements and magazine pictures can help to stimulate the appetite or trigger memories of good meals.
- Share your magazines or grocery store ads with your loved one, and use them to brainstorm meal ideas.

### Be sociable during mealtimes.

- Meals are only healthy and nutritious if the patient consumes them. Making mealtimes social times that are relaxing and fun can help improve appetite, and make unpleasant side effects more bearable.
- The patient should stay sitting up after meals to reduce heartburn and reflux.
- Enjoy sharing meals with your loved one and talk about something other than treatments and meal preparation.



To find more tips and strategies, by specific side effect, visit [www.pearlpoint.org/SideEffects](http://www.pearlpoint.org/SideEffects) to view the full side-effect management series.

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**Grocery Shopping.** A trip to the grocery store may be a tiring event for someone with cancer. Some patients may need a little help, such as a ride to the store or help carrying heavy items. For others with limited stamina and immunity, grocery shopping may not be possible. Here is where a caregiver, friends, relatives, and neighbors can really provide help.

**Grocery Shopping Tips.** These following grocery shopping tips will make the trip easier.

**Shop with a list.** Make copies of a standardized grocery list, which includes perishables such as milk and bread. It can be added to each week. Add in-season fruits and veggies. Add any new items for changes in special dietary needs.



Use the **Grocery List** on page 22 to begin with a fully stocked pantry.

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**Shop early in the day.** If you live in warmer climates and shop early in the day, the food will stay cold while you are driving, and it will be cooler when you are unloading the groceries at home. The grocery store may also be less crowded, as many people tend to shop after work or on weekends.

**Bring a cooler.** If you plan to buy chilled or frozen foods, take a cooler with you to keep the food at a safe temperature until you get home.

**Check the dates.** Cancer patients often have decreased immunity. This means that they are at a greater risk for infection and disease. Be sure to only purchase foods that have not passed the expiration date. Also, don't purchase foods with damaged packaging.

**Read the label.** Some dietary restrictions may limit specific ingredients, such as acid, alcohol, fiber, grapefruit, iodine, lactose, or sodium. The healthcare team or a registered dietitian can provide a written list of suggested and restricted foods.

**Grab cold foods last.** When shopping, select fresh items and room temperature items first. Then grab cold and frozen foods right before you check out at the grocery store. This helps keep the cold and frozen foods at a safe temperature on the drive home.

**Learn more about organic foods.** "Organic" means that the produce was grown and harvested without the addition of any pesticides or chemicals. For the word "organic" to be on a label, the product must meet certain United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)-approved guidelines.



If you are interested in buying organic foods but cost is a concern, visit the Environmental Working Group website for a list of foods with the least amount of pesticide residue ([www.ewg.org/foodnews/clean-fifteen.php](http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/clean-fifteen.php)) and a list of foods with higher amounts of pesticide residue ([www.ewg.org/foodnews/dirty-dozen.php](http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/dirty-dozen.php)). The foods with less pesticide residue can be bought conventionally to save money.

**Use coupons.** Look online and in the newspaper for coupons, especially coupons for protein beverages and supplemental products recommended by the healthcare team. Some specialty products can be pricey. Check out the product websites for coupons or contact the manufacturer.

**Save the receipt.** Saving the receipt can help you and/or your loved one to stick to a budget.

**Check out food delivery and pickup services.** Many grocery stores now offer pickup services. Send a list to the store ahead of time. A store employee then puts together the grocery order. Once your groceries are ready, go to the store, and an employee will load them in to your car.

Some online retailers and stores offer food delivery services. If a trip to the grocery store isn't feasible, think about having groceries delivered to your door.

**Treat your loved one.** Your loved one may be on a limited budget for food. If you spot a special food, flower, or magazine that the patient might enjoy, pick it up for him or her if you can.

**Meal and Snack Ideas.** Meals and snacks do not have to be elaborate to be healthy and nutritious. Combine foods from different groups, such as proteins, fruits, vegetables or complex carbohydrates to create a complete meal. Here are a few meal and snack suggestions that are easy-to-prepare and require minimal cooking.

Keep in mind that these meals and snacks are only suggestions. Make changes, as necessary, to accommodate food allergies or to follow nutrition guidelines provided by the healthcare team. Always practice good food

## BREAKFAST

- Scramble an egg to eat with whole-wheat toast and a glass of low-fat milk. Serve some grapes on the side.
- Mix a whole-grain cereal with low-fat milk and a banana.
- Make oatmeal with low-fat milk instead of water. Mix in blueberries, cinnamon and walnuts.
- Top whole-grain toaster waffles with strawberries and reduced-fat cream cheese.
- Mix a low-fat yogurt with peaches and raisins. Top with low-fat granola.
- Try a whole-grain muffin paired with low-fat milk and pineapple.
- Pair whole-grain grits with a fresh orange and a hard-boiled egg.
- Make a berry smoothie by blending 1 ½ cups of mixed strawberries and blueberries, ½ cup of low-fat or nonfat yogurt, 1 cup of ice and a splash of low-fat milk.
- Spread peanut butter on a toasted whole-wheat bagel topped with sliced bananas.
- Make a breakfast sandwich with a whole-wheat English muffin, egg and slice of cheese. Pair with an apple.



## LUNCH

- Pair lean, nitrite-free ham with a slice of Swiss cheese, spinach leaves and tomato slices on whole-wheat bread. Heat in a pan on the stove for a couple of minutes for a hot ham and Swiss cheese sandwich. Pair with a peach.
- Try low-sodium tomato soup from a carton with a grilled cheese sandwich and a pear.
- Top whole-wheat English muffin halves with pizza sauce, tomatoes and shredded mozzarella to make a mini margarita pizza. Place in the oven or toaster oven to heat. You can add peppers or basil for taste. Add a side salad with dried cranberries and vinaigrette.
- Mix tuna from a foil pouch or can with low-fat mayonnaise to make tuna salad. Put on toasted whole-wheat bread with lettuce and tomato. Pair with grapes and string cheese.
- Roll nitrite-free turkey meat, a cheddar cheese slice, mustard and lettuce in a whole-wheat tortilla. Pair with cucumber slices and an apple.
- Mix a low-fat Greek yogurt with raspberries and blackberries and top with almonds. Serve a salad made with favorite vegetables, such as peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes or onion. Add a favorite salad dressing.
- Make a sandwich with peanut or almond butter and banana slices on whole-wheat bread. Pair with low-fat cottage cheese and grape tomatoes.
- Try a quesadilla made with a whole-wheat tortilla, shredded cheese and bell pepper strips. Heat in a pan on the stove or in the microwave. Top with tomato salsa and pair with a plum.
- Microwave or bake a potato, top with low-sodium chili, shredded cheese and broccoli.
- Try a chicken wrap made with a whole-wheat tortilla, with hummus or tomato and feta cheese. Pair with melon chunks.



## SNACKS

- Trail mix or mixed nuts
- Whole fruits, such as apples, bananas, plums or grapes
- Raw veggies, such as carrots, bell peppers, or cucumbers and hummus
- Low-fat yogurt cups
- Low-fat string cheese or cheese cubes
- Boiled eggs
- Peanut butter sandwich or crackers
- Tuna or salmon with crackers
- Liquid nutrition-supplement drink
- Fruit smoothie with nonfat yogurt
- Hummus with veggie sticks or whole-grain crackers.



## TIP:

Take snacks for your loved one and for yourself with you when you have a long appointment or on treatment days. Use an insulated lunch bag with an ice pack for refrigerated items. Don't forget bottles of water so that you can both stay hydrated.

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## DINNER

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- **Spaghetti:** Top whole-wheat spaghetti noodles with a sauce made with ground turkey, crushed tomatoes, green peppers and onion. Add low-fat cheese, if desired. Pair with a side salad with a favorite dressing.
- **Chicken stir fry:** Stir-fry cubed chicken breast with red peppers, onions, carrots and broccoli in olive or canola oil. Serve with whole-grain brown rice. Finish with a dessert of mandarin oranges and low-fat yogurt.
- **Loaded baked potatoes:** Top a baked or microwaved potato with shredded cheese and chili. Add additional toppings, if desired. Serve with steamed broccoli.
- **Black bean tacos:** Fill corn tortillas with black beans, lettuce, tomato, diced cucumbers and shredded cheese for delicious vegetarian tacos. Top with salsa and avocado. Serve with diced cantaloupe for a complete meal.
- **Roasted chicken and veggies:** Roast sliced zucchini and squash topped with a little olive oil, pepper and Parmesan cheese. Serve with baked chicken breasts and a whole-grain roll.
- **Grilled salmon salad:** Prepare a green salad with dark, leafy greens like spinach or romaine and top with grilled salmon, feta cheese, sliced almonds, mandarin oranges, raisins, cucumbers, tomatoes and a favorite dressing. Serve with a slice of whole-grain toasted bread.
- **Burger:** Top a cooked lean beef, ground turkey or veggie burger with a low-fat cheese slice, lettuce, tomatoes, and onions and serve on a whole-wheat bun. Pair with a corn and tomato salad and a side of strawberries, watermelon and blueberries.
- **Soup with grilled cheese:** Pair a homemade or store-bought vegetable and bean soup with a grilled cheese and tomato sandwich on whole-grain bread. Add a fruit and low-fat yogurt smoothie for dessert.
- **Hawaiian pizza:** Assemble a homemade Hawaiian pizza using a premade whole-wheat pizza crust, pizza sauce and low-fat shredded cheese. Top with pineapple, cubed cooked chicken, mushrooms, peppers and onions and bake. Serve with a side salad.
- **Shrimp and veggies:** Heat precooked shrimp on the stove top. Add a small amount of olive oil, lemon juice, garlic and pepper. Serve with sides of roasted tomatoes, asparagus, and a whole-wheat roll. Serve a bowl of fresh strawberries for dessert.
- **Dinner omelet:** Prepare an omelet that includes sliced mushrooms, tomatoes and onions. Serve with a fresh green salad and roasted new potatoes.
- **Veggie casserole:** Cook macaroni and cheese pasta; stir in steamed veggies like broccoli, cauliflower and carrots. Toss in cooked tofu, ground beef, turkey or chopped chicken. Serve cooked apples or sliced peaches for dessert.



More places to find recipes and meal suggestions:

**PearlPoint Nutrition Services®:** [www.pearlpoint.org/recipe](http://www.pearlpoint.org/recipe)

**American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR):** [www.aicr.org](http://www.aicr.org)

**Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND):** [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) or [www.oncologynutrition.org](http://www.oncologynutrition.org)

**Cook for Your Life:** [www.cookforyourlife.org](http://www.cookforyourlife.org)

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Nutrition Notes

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# APPENDIX- WORKSHEETS

Use the following worksheets to help you in your caregiving role.

Visit **[www.pearlpoint.org/worksheets](http://www.pearlpoint.org/worksheets)** to print additional copies.

# FOOD INTAKE AND SIDE-EFFECTS LOG

Visit [www.pearlpoint.org/worksheets/](http://www.pearlpoint.org/worksheets/) to access all worksheets.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Keeping track of your food intake, side effects, and overall well-being is very important during cancer treatment. Seeing how food intake affects the way the you feel can provide insights for you and members of the healthcare team. Tracking food intake may only be necessary at certain times during treatment. If there is concern about a decline in food intake, monitor your weight. Ask members of the healthcare team what makes sense for you. Note whether the day being recorded is a treatment day.

TIME OF DAY MEAL	FOOD AND BEVERAGES	AMOUNT	HOW DOES THE PATIENT FEEL? List any side effects the patient experiences.
Breakfast			
Snack			
Lunch			
Snack			
Dinner			
Snack			

Circle the patient's overall well-being for the day. 0 is the worst, 10 is the best.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
Worst Best

# MEAL PLANNING

Visit [www.pearlpoint.org/worksheets/](http://www.pearlpoint.org/worksheets/) to access all worksheets.

Planning meals in advance is a great way to include a variety of healthy foods in the patient's menu each week. A written meal plan can also remind you of leftovers to use for lunch or snacks later in the week. It takes the guesswork out of meal-time. Refer to this worksheet while planning your grocery list so you'll have all the ingredients you'll need on hand.

The Week of \_\_\_\_\_

DAY	MENU ITEMS	LEFTOVERS
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Notes and Grocery Reminders:

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# GROCERY LIST

Visit [www.pearlpoint.org/worksheets/](http://www.pearlpoint.org/worksheets/)  
to access all worksheets.

## PANTRY

Keep your loved one's pantry stocked with healthy food options during treatment and recovery. Use this suggested grocery list to get started. Keep in mind that these foods are only suggestions. Make changes, as necessary, to accommodate food allergies or to follow the nutrition guidelines recommended by the healthcare team.

### Grains

- Whole-grain breads
- Crackers
- Whole-grain rice and pasta
- Oatmeal and hot cereal
- Couscous, bulgur wheat and quinoa
- Cereal
- Natural popcorn
- Flour and breadcrumbs
- Whole-grain cereal

### Fruits/Vegetables

- Canned and dried fruits
- Applesauce (unsweetened)
- Potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Onions and garlic
- Canned tomatoes and veggies
- Instant mashed potatoes

### Dairy

- Nonfat dry milk or whey protein powder
- Evaporated milk

### Proteins

- Canned fish and chicken (packed in water)
- Natural peanut and almond butter
- Unsalted nuts and seeds
- Canned and dried beans/peas
- Protein bars

### Fats and Oils

- Olive and canola oil
- Cooking spray

### Other

- Low-sodium soup and stock
- Dried herbs and spices
- Assorted vinegars
- Decaffeinated teas
- Decaffeinated coffee
- Flavored drink mixes
- Pudding and gelatin
- Honey, sugar or stevia

### Extra Pantry Groceries:

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## REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER

### Grains

- Whole-grain waffles
- Whole-grain breads

### Fruits/Vegetables

- Fresh fruits and veggies
- Packaged salad
- 100% juice concentrate
- Tomato or fruit salsa

### Dairy

- Low-fat milk
- Low-fat yogurt
- Low-fat cheese
- Low-fat cottage and ricotta cheese
- Fortified soy, almond and rice milk
- Sherbet, yogurt and ice cream

### Proteins

- Eggs
- Skinless chicken breast

- Lean pork
- Lean beef
- Turkey breast
- Deli meats (nitrate free)
- Hummus
- Fish or shrimp

### Fats and Oils *(Use full-fat choices if weight loss is an issue)*

- Low-fat mayonnaise
- Low-fat salad dressings
- Low-fat sour cream
- Soft *trans*-fat-free margarine (in a tub)

### Other

- Fortified 100% juice
- Sports drinks
- Nutrition drinks
- Popsicles
- Ready-to-eat meals

### Extra Groceries:

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